

Reid, Tom

Reid: Folks can you hear me all right? Can you understand it? That's the main thing.  
[Inaudible section]

Folks I'm Tom Reid, and I was born on [Cigotiga], nineteen hundred and one. Long time ago. And at that time, just so everybody lives on these little coastal islands, we made our living by harvesting the crops and sea. Such as clams, oysters, fish, crabs,[inaudible][black terrapins] , snapping turtles, and you was [use] to anything that could swim or crawl. And a lot of us in the wintertime, we would hunt ducks for a living. It was legal to hunt ducks any time of the year. They had no season on them. Anyway, we would start harvesting these crops as soon as the ducks would come back from the North [in the fall]. We'd be working on fishing boats, lots of us or crab boats or clam boats. But the first ducks we seen moving south we would quit what we were doing, get ready to harvest this crop of ducks. We would harvest each crop just like farmers harvest their crops. Same with the fish. They'd start coming up in spring. We would have our fishnets ready and catch all the fish we could catch. And we would catch them clean until they went back in the fall. And the same thing with the ducks. We'd start shooting them as soon as they come back from the North. And shoot them clean until they went back. And all that was legal. And you didn't learn these trades in books. There wasn't nothing wrote in books that teach you how to harvest the crops from the sea. We learned from our fathers or older brothers, and we got paid from what we harvested. Got paid so much a bushel for crabs, and oysters, and so much a pound for fish and so much a [inaudible] for ducks and like that. It caused us to work real hard. We tried to excel, each of us, who could catch the most and make the most money. And as we got older, we would, some of us became better clammers, some the better fishermen, some better crabbers, some better clammers, some better hunters. And I happened to be one of the little better hunters. And I followed that trade, I wouldn't say religiously. I would be working on a clam boat or something, and as soon as the ducks started down, I'd quit other things and go get ready to go hunting. And like I was saying it was all legal way back. No laws against hunting ducks. When they'd come, we started shooting them and kept on until they went back. But as the years passed by, they started to [stab] some laws on these ducks. I think I was maybe seventeen or eighteen before I ever heard of a game law. And the first law that I heard about was that it took off the month of March. You can't shoot ducks in March any more. But we didn't mind cause we were getting ready to go fishing anyway. But later on, they took off the month of October. You can't shoot ducks in fall any more. You know. It just felt [inaudible] that you could shoot ducks three months [momentary

silence in tape] kill all you could shoot and sell them. No law against it. But as time went on, they started to [stab] some bag limits on these ducks. You can only kill so many in a day. And I think the first law I remember was either twenty-four or thirty-four that you could kill. And we could do pretty good if we killed twenty-four or thirty-four. Some days you could kill more, and we'd still do it. And some days, you could kill less. But anyway, they kept cutting the bag limit down and shortening the fees in over a year or two. And when it got down to ten ducks a day, none of these people who hunted for a living, we couldn't make a living with ten ducks. Just about all the people, we became [outlaw] hunters then. They say you can't kill no more than ten, but we had to have more than ten ducks to raise our families. Just for all of us to get by some kind of way to get more ducks home by the law. We could always kill more. Sometimes the law would be waiting at the docks for you. If you had too many, you were in trouble. Or chase you down if you were coming home with too many. You were in trouble. Just for all of us to figure out some kind of way. Why if we get more home and I'll find an old [inaudible words]. made out of [bossar] wood. And I took it over to Mr. old [inaudible] old decoy [inaudible]. All my decoys are [collectors] there. He made them all just about. [inaudible] in 1920 [inaudible] He said "Tom, that old [Bossar] wood ain't any good for decoys. It [beats up easy for oil paint]." I said, "Well, I got a little boat. It's [inaudible]." He made me twenty! But I didn't tell him what I had in mind when he was making them. I took them home and I hauled them out. [inaudible] Then when I'm [in a hunting], the first twenty ducks I saw, I would stuff one in each decoy. And I could bring me home twenty illegal ducks. If I had my legal ten, that would make me thirty in a day. And I brought home as many as thirty illegal ducks cause it took, you could put two little ducks by [heads or tails], and when the decoy, [button them up, and when you] throw all around together[ the other decoys, I can lay that one to rest.] And I just find out one time [that I could] gain more[ at a ]shoot one morning and I threw around a decoy and the old decoy rot. And I was afraid the [bottom] would pop open and the ducks roll out, but never did. And I looked down the boat and I always kept a few ducks in the boat anyway. And he looked down the boat and said, "Tom, this [inaudible] ain't done much." And I said, "Well I ain't hitting them too good today." [We talked for a little while] But one morning, I was hunting. I had done pretty good. I had a duck in each decoy just floating there. And I had another decoy. And a little plane came out. [inaudible] with little [pontoons] on it. It was a little, yellow[ I-frame]. It was the first time I ever saw a plane with [pontoons] on it before. It landed down in the water. I was [inaudible]. When it hit the bank, a big Chesapeake Bay retriever jumped out of it. [This plane.] Started sniffing around this island. Just smelling ever little [inaudible] and [inaudible] bushes he could

find. [I felt] good. He had been trained to smell [out] illegal ducks where people [are] hiding [in the grass]. I felt pretty good cause I had none hidden in the grass anyhow. Well that dog [inaudible] and came back [inaudible] game warden and started sniffing, smelling, just like he smelled them ducks in them decoys. And I [stopped and watched that dog] [inaudible] smell them ducks and he was gonna give me away. So I thought [right] quick, and I said "Is he a good retriever?" He said, "He's one of the best." I said, "Mind if I try him out?" He said, "No, go ahead." So I picked [inaudible] up [inaudible] and [inaudible] started rowing. I tossed it just [inaudible] in the opposite direction from the decoy. And the dog, he's up in the [inaudible] tail right then and grabbed it back up in his mouth and [inaudible] and [brought it right to the game warden's seat.] But that dog wasn't satisfied. He still kept sniffing that toward them decoys. And I thought [inaudible] he's going to give me away in a [half]. So I said to the game warden, "What if I do that again?" I said, "Let's watch that dog retrieve." He said, "No." Said, "Go ahead, It's good training for the dog." [inaudible] I said, "Alright, where that dog at? That's why he took off and left." But I never did hide no more ducks in any more decoys as long as he stays around here. And my son, young Tom, he used them old decoys [five] or six years after I quit hunting. He come home and said, "Dad, I don't know why you put bottoms into the [ones with strings around them]." He said, "The water runs down in my boots." I never did tell him he could hide ducks in them. He never did [detect it]. [To interrupt,] folks I don't know if you folks has done any hunting or not. You can't butt heads on [them things.] [And I wanna hunt.] That's the [inaudible] decoy, most easy to paint. But, that's just a black duck. Most ducks that feeds in the morning, feeds with their heads under the water cause the food's in the bottom of the pool. And they swim around with their heads under the water, even catching fish. All you see when you see a bunch of ducks feeding in the [morning] is all that, but his head is under the water. [So several of them] like when they go hunting. [Bout wounded with their heads up.] And a duck sees them to think there's a lot of feed ducks, and so they fall right along in. No trouble at all. Now this here, see the duck can't reach [the] bottom. [The] water's too deep. They tip up. Anybody done any hunting seen ducks with their tail sticking up in the air. Waving like that. Acts like it's alive. [Little bit of wave action.] Wiggles it, just like a live duck. [inaudible] Let's see, I've got the [inaudible] on my boat. And folks this little boat. You see me standing [inaudible] at night [inaudible] ducks in the back with a light on the front. Now that light would blind the ducks so the duck couldn't see the hunter in the boat. We'd be [inaudible] the ducks before it got dark, and they laid our lights and aimed it by the ducks [inaudible]. Then when it got dark enough that we could walk in the front, that boat made [the little things] look...Squat down and kind of see the boat behind the light and you

know the ducks never see the man in the boat. So then he takes the lure. [pauses] See that there? That old [meat ruin]. That's been in there more than twenty years. We'd squat down in the boat and [inaudible] on ducks and that [meat ruin], you can't hear that oar hitting wood. See that's why you [scull] a boat and move right along, sneak down on these ducks. You get twenty-four or thirty out of one flock. That was legal too when I started. [inaudible] got illegal. Now folks, I don't know if any of you people ever eaten a [shore bird] or not. But it's just about the best meat you can get in a [shore bird], yellow [inaudible], [curlers], [inaudible] and stuff like that. Way back when we were boys, it was legal to shoot [shore birds]. [inaudible for four of us that we much lack.] Sometime mother said, "Boys let's come tomorrow. We need food for the table. And we'd take a little gun and [inaudible]. And a [bashing inaudible] on flats. And shoot a bunch of shore birds and catch a big batch of our soft crab. Plenty of that stuff was out there. And we would harvest, just like farmers, harvest our crops. We didn't have to [plan] it. The good Lord [planned] it for us. Anyway, we'd shoot these shore birds and bring them home. Eat them. Come in and talk about them for years to come. Such good eating. But later on, it got illegal to shoot shore birds. But some of us, see we'd eat them so much. It was so good, we hated to quit. Just about like someone drinking, ya know? We'd take an old [throw away] gun, we called it. A gun they didn't mind throwing overboard if you see a game warden coming. We'd shoot them while [we're clamming]. And most of us [got] us a bag with a stone in it. We'd see the game warden coming, we'd just either toss it and it'd sink down into the water, but sometimes, he'd see us throw that bag and he'd drag a line with a [inaudible] in it and pick it up. We'd be in trouble. But I had my bag tied to the [inaudible] rope with a long string. And I'd get it tossed [inaudible]. The game warden would see it hit the water, he'd run right quick. There's a boat go round and around. Why I seen the [bag full], but I [inaudible] with the bag just as they were coming over the water. As I move the boat, I'd get followed and he'd go around and around while he seen it hit. And I'm going down to get farther [inaudible]. I swear, he give up. [Chase me down.] Said, "Tom, I heard the shoot," He said, "I seen you throw the bag." I said, "I didn't shoot. I [hadn't even] brought a gun." He looked at [me], front of the boat, and under the back of the boat. Scratched his head and said, "[inaudible] didn't shoot. I guess I guess I made a mistake. " He didn't know I had a gun back under my suit. And they never did catch me. Now folks, I don't think you people notice nothing bad, these [down in the bag] boats. We'd grow up on these [inaudible]. We'd be [inaudible] the oysters and clams and stuff around where we live. We'd have to take trips far away from home. We had little, we called, [down in the [unknown] boats.] They'd sleep bout four or five people. Maybe four youngsters and an older man, to run the boat. Our main food supply

was [bread], meat, and molasses. We always had a jug of molasses and a slab of hog meat. And some little bags of [inaudible]. Made our own bread, and baked it on a little wood stove. Our main [inaudible] was bread, meat, and molasses. And we'd always have these jugs we'd [sell] when they came home off from these trips. Old grocery had old big [inaudible] of molasses sitting up in the store. And there was a lot of flies around, [inaudible] was the only thing. And he'd fill us the jugs up, and we'd tie them down in these little boats. Had this bread, meat, and molasses for breakfast. One morning, a boy [pulled his stop out] and put his [jug on.] [inaudible] Couple more minutes later, another boy pulled a [stop out] and set it up. He said, "I know that's a [inaudible]." I said, "That ain't no [inaudible] it came from the inside of the bough" He scraped inside and kept on [inaudible]. Later another boy pulled that [inaudible] and [inaudible] that jug and nothing came out. And he looked and there was a little mouse's tail hanging out. And we caught that mouse setting in that [inaudible]. And we stopped and laughed on that [dead mouse] [inaudible]. Now folks, a lot of people look for , millions of people like me, to call outlaw [hunters] like we were criminals or something, but we never [figured we were doing] nothing wrong when we killed too many ducks cause we grew up on these [farms] and that was our way of life, our way of getting a living. We were like a fox [inaudible] stealing a chicken out of a chicken house. You want to kill the fox, to shoot the fox, [you think the fox did wrong]. But that fox don't think he's doing wrong [cause there's] something to eat. Maybe an eagle swooped down on a little lamb, picked it up. Rancher wants to shoot the eagle, but that eagle don't know he's doing wrong. Don't think he's doing wrong. [He] just [haves] something to eat. So, that's the way we were. [We don't feel guilty when we was] always a game law. I quit being an outlaw gunner, and I write some poems. I've got some little poem books I sell for two dollars a book. It's twenty-four poems in em. And anybody that wants a book ain't got two dollars, I give ya a book. But anyhow, I'll just take one of these poems. I made em with all my self, and know them. And I'll recite one. This one is called, "Smile." Goes like this:

We just passed through this lake but once.

So try to be happy and gay.

Greet all the people you meet with smiles,

For it might just feel better that way.

[Do] lots of kindness as you pass along.

Make all the plans that you can.

It will make you feel good,

As you trod down the road

Toward the end of your little lifespan.

There are times in our lives,  
We may feel depressed.  
And wakeups seem hardly worthwhile.  
But those [inaudible] will vanish away,  
If you just look in the mirror and smile.

For a smile works like magic, this you'll find,  
In just about all that they do.  
So smile at a fellow or a girl you meet on the street,  
And a big smile will come back to you.

If you give em [away] again as you leave,  
And always have [inaudible]  
You can save [inaudible] all the smiles that you get,  
And noone can steal them from you.

For smiles are forever,  
They never wear out.  
You can use them again and again.  
They never get tarnished, they never grow old.  
They even shine out in the rain.

So give them away, as fast and you can,  
To the people you meet young and old.  
And you'll find I'm sure, when you come to the end,  
The smiles are far better than gold.

For gold has no value when you lay down to die.  
And jewels are lost in life's race.  
But I was happy to know when I leave this old world,  
and I die with a smile on my face.

Thanks for listening to it.